

## South Korea: Current Agriculture News and Issues

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### Ban on US beef officially removed, talks with Canada suspended

**Government officials in South Korea and the United States have officially reached an agreement to remove the ban on US beef products in South Korea. It is anticipated that imports of US beef will resume by the end of March 2006. Meanwhile, after another outbreak of mad cow disease was discovered in Canada, Korean officials announced that they have suspended negotiations with Canadian officials to discuss the resumption of Canadian beef imports.**

As of January 13, 2006, the South Korean government and the United States government reached an official agreement regarding the removal of the ban on US beef products. Under the agreement, only boneless beef slaughtered from cattle under the age of 30 months will be allowed for import, excluding beef products such as short ribs, offals and processed and ground meat. Once various import procedures are completed, including inspection of US meat establishments, it is anticipated that imports of US beef could be resumed as early as the end of March 2006.

In an effort to prepare Korea's domestic beef industry for the resumption of US beef imports, South Korea's Ministry of Agriculture announced that it will focus on improving the quality of Korean beef and building the Korean beef brand. In fact, agriculture officials indicate that they plan to increase the number of Korean beef brands from the current level of 29 to approximately 50 by the year 2013. While some Korean beef producers fear that the re-entry of US beef to the market could lower domestic beef prices, agriculture officials point out that the resumption of US beef imports will provide a good opportunity for the industry to increase its competitiveness.

Meanwhile, Korean Ministry of Agriculture officials announced in late January 2006 that it has suspended negotiations with Canada regarding the resumption of Canadian beef imports into South Korea. The announcement came after Canadian officials confirmed another case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy, or mad cow disease, on January 23, 2006. According to South Korean officials, the decision was made to suspend negotiations with Canadian officials until further tests surrounding the incident have been conducted. Officials from both countries were originally set to meet in February 2006 to discuss the removal of Korea's ban on Canadian beef. However, it remains unclear as to when or if negotiations will continue.

SOURCES: Agence France Presse, Asia Pulse, Foreign Agricultural Service of the US Department of Agriculture, and the Korea Herald

